



On May 12, 2005, the Iowa Legislature passed a bold Medicaid reform initiative called "IowaCare," which was signed into law by Governor Vilsack. Included within the IowaCare legislation was the following mandate:

*" By July 1, 2008, every recipient of medical assistance who is a child twelve years of age or younger shall have a designated dental home and shall be provided with the dental screenings and preventive care identified in the oral health standards under the early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment program."*

In response to this legislation, the Iowa Department of Human Services partnered with the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Iowa Dental Association, the Iowa Dental Hygienists' Association, Delta Dental of Iowa, and the University of Iowa College of Dentistry to develop a proposal that would fulfill the dental home mandate. The result is called the I-Smile™ Dental Home Project.

Components of I-Smile™ include improving the dental support system for families, improving the dental Medicaid program, implementing recruitment and retention strategies for underserved areas, and integrating dental services into rural and critical access hospitals. I-Smile™ is based upon a conceptual dental home, allowing a team approach to manage oral disease. Primary prevention and care coordination are the focus of the project, centered in Iowa's existing public health network.

Dental hygienists, serving as I-Smile™ oral health coordinators, are beginning to implement the project within Iowa's 23 Title V child health agencies. These coordinators are developing partnerships, establishing referral systems, providing training and education for healthcare professionals, ensuring completion of oral screenings and risk assessments, working within their agencies to develop oral health protocols, ensuring oral health care coordination, and providing gap-filling preventive services. Iowa's low-income and Medicaid-enrolled children will benefit from the multi-disciplinary approach to early prevention and treatment of dental disease—resulting in a dental home for children.